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MYRTLE AND MYRRH

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AMEEN RIHANI

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Myrtle and Myrrh

by

Ameen Rihani

Translator of

"The Quatrains of Abu'l-Ala"



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March 1/30

To my sisters
SAADA AND ADELE



SALAAM

From Syria to America

Pardon, dear reader.

The stranger at thy gate, hailing from the Orient, holds out to thee a gaunt and tatoood hand. This hand has often made mud-pies from earth that might have once mapped out the stars; or, in a drunken vision, heard the grumblings of a god and made of them a captivating creed: the brain of an ancient Assyrian astronomer; the spine of a Semitic sage; the cheeks of a Jezebel or a St. Takla; the heart of a slave that added beauty and horror to the chariot of a Babylonian king or a Roman conqueror:—any or all of these might have besmeared this hand.

Wilt thou take it? The hand of a personified illusion, of an exiled dream, of an Oriental who makes himself thy guest.

He comes not to preach Buddhism to thee; nor Mohammedanism; nor Babyism; nor any other ism made picturesque and alluring by red caftans, white turbans, blue sashes and ambergris-scented lies.

The only message he brings from his vine-crowned and pine-girdled Mother to bewitching and enriching America is that of love and longing and lacrimal. He came from the Mountains of Lebanon, from under the shadow of the Acropolis of Baalbak, to learn from the Yankees the way to do things—the way to rise and flourish and expand; or, as they put it, the way to get there and be it—from a mundane point of view, of course. It has been observed, however, that the spots of a leopard are irremovable; and so is the lethargy of an Oriental.

The writer has found the strenuous life to be as depressing and dwarfing as prison life itself; and so he has fallen back to the habit of dreaming, and singing, and taking things easy, even in restless and dreamless America. This sounds paradoxical; it is like going from the country of Trusts and Equality to establish a trolley-car system in the Lebanons. Even this might be possible fifty years hence, despite the opposition of those ancient hills. The writer has forsaken their cedars and pines, their vineyards and fig groves to walk in the shadows of sky-scrapers and watch the sun rise languidly from behind a mound of bricks or a smoking chimney, and sink a-blushing behind the grimy walls of gaseous Communipaw.

"So fair a sun
Setting over so foul a town!"

one would exclaim; but nature delights in paradoxes, and freaks, and rococo. These songs, dear reader, might not even deserve to be classified with like phenomena; but, as the sincere expression of a soul just emerging from the abyss, they deserve to stand. If, however, thou thinkest them no worse in spirit and merit than the amyelencephalic discourses of a pundit, or the emetic dissertations of a Zamackshary, then remember as thou settest the book aside that the author does not appeal to your charity, nor to your justice. Thou art the host, gentle reader; and he relies on the hospitality and cordiality due a guest.

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Myrtle and Myrrh



EVER TO BE

My far cry, though no one should echo,—
Though no one to listen should stand,
I shall dare with my burden the darkness
And I shall not retreat from this land;
Though I'm hurled 'neath the feet of the mil-
lions,
Who struggle their places to keep,
The sea-nymphs still bathe with my Fancy
And the Dryads still sweeten my sleep.

Though I'm crushed, cast away and forgotten,—
Though I'm buried in the dust of their cars,
I can see through their madness above me,—
I can feel the quick pulse of the stars:
Though my head be the foot-stool of tyrants,
Though my back be a step to their throne,
I still dwell with the kings of Orion
And I walk with the sun-queen alone.

Though the fire of my youth should consume
me,—
Though my body a brimstone should be,
I can draw on the clouds for their water
And behold! I've of water a sea:
And though roofless, and friendless, and hope-
less,
And loveless, and godless I stand,
The waves of my Life shall continue
To murmur and laugh on the Strand.

UPON THE PEAK OF SANNEEN

My soul and I, upon the peak
Of Sanneen grim and grey,
Sat musing in the twilight of
A sombre summer day.

"Great Saturn and the Moon are gone
Together o'er the sea;
But will great Saturn e'er return
Should he elope with thee?"

Ah well, who knows? when thou art gone
I, too, shall sink within the brine,—
I, too, shall sail above this peak
And signal yonder groves of pine.

Behold the melancholy sky
Of this forgotten land;
On this side are the valleys bleak,
On this, the desert sand."

"I hear the moaning of the wind,"
My sad companion said;
"The snow is gathering in me
And the night is overhead.

Long have we dwelt together, friend,
In our sweet ennui;
But were I now to take my leave,
Alas, what would I be?"

"O, think not of departing,
Ah, too young I am to die:
I'll find the magic wings; and there
Still hangs a friendly sky.

Let us above these pines, and clouds,
And scents awhile yet dwell;—
Where wouldst thou go, if thou wert now
To sigh a last farewell?"

Thou seest the busy elements
Dissolving one by one
The souls that are acquitted,
For the all-absorbing sun.

Let's sing the song of darkness then;
Thy prison is the Whole;—
What canst thou do, where wilt thou go,
What wilt thou be, my Soul?

Thou wouldst not be the air that weighs
Upon the rising dust;
Thou wouldst not be the fog that chokes
The air in savage lust.

Thou wouldst not be the clouds that block
The smoke's way to a star;
Nor linger in the guilty tears
Of clouds before the bar.

Thou wouldst not be the rain that taunts
The all-devouring sea,
Itself destroying many a nest
In bush and rock and tree.

Thou wouldst not be the thunder's tongue
Spell-binding all the spheres;
Nor wouldst thou be the lightning blade
That stabs and disappears.

Thou wouldst not be the dew that falls
Alike on thorn and flower;

Nor even the morning zephyr
That blows o'er den and bower.

Thou wouldst not be the virgin snow
Set free from yonder clouds,
Only to melt beneath the feet
Of surging human crowds."

"No! none of these," my Soul replied;
"I'll shiver ever thrall;
O let me rise, for I would be
The sky above them all."

THE PHILISTINE

The cricket to the corn-crake came one day,
Shivering, yet buzzing in his wanton way,
And said: "I'm slain
By hunger, brother, turn thou not from me:
'Tis winter, and I only beg of thee
A little grain."

The corn-crake grinned and said in tone sublime:
"Where wert thou hidden in the harvest time,
Thou dinning drone?
Why didst thou not come with us to the fields
To gather something for thy winter meals
Of what had grown?"

"O, I was entertaining with my rhymes
The vineyards, and the fig trees, and the thymes
The summer long."
"No then," replied the corn-crake, "not a seed
Have I for such as thou; go home and feed
Upon thy Song."

MY BORNOOSE

Into this world they tell me I was sent
Wrapt in a bornoose, which was rudely rent
And flung away, by her who first didst touch
My steaming flesh; I never loved her much,
The surly, stolid, sordid, spectral hag:
For never would my star of fortune lag—
No dwarf of earth to oppose my will would
dare—

If my sebaceous bornoose she did spare,
And if around my neck, the *ajous* says,
It hung, locked in a charm, for twenty days.
But ever since the amulet was torn,
The curse of gods and jinn and men I've worn;
And to my flesh it stuck—a Nessus shirt—
Despite the oozing blood, and not spurt
Of power, alas! is left me to control
The stinging tongue of an avenging soul.

A SPRING DIRGE

Sad, sad, sad—
In vain thou comest, Spring ;
Sad, sad, sad—
In vain thy birds all sing :
Perfumeless is thy rose ;
Thy breeze, which softly blows,
Disturbs my sea of woes,
Ay, Death is on the wing.

Gone, gone, gone—
Go seek her, mocking Spring ;
Gone, gone, gone—
Aside thy garlands fling ;
Destroy thy laughing bower ;
Call back an April shower
To weep with me this hour :
He came, not reckoning.

Love, love, love—
What sendest thou with Spring ?
Love, love, love—
What tidings these birds bring !
They tell me they can hear
Thee, in a higher sphere ;
But can that dry a tear,
Or give my wish a wing ?

FARDI WA NAFLI

This was written in the hospital where Mr. Rihani's sister suffered for more than two years. She was taken sick not long before the day appointed for her wedding.

I

"Here she is: O take her not away so soon!
Spare her youth—the fatal cup from her with-
hold!
Let her groan within my arms in life's fore-
noon;
Let me still my soul within her eyes unfold."
God of Love! my faith in thee is not yet gray:
Grant that she may walk again,
Free from suffering and pain—
Give her life to see the altar's light one day.

II

In the night, before the day that never came,
On the way with poppies and gardenias
strewn,
With her music and her torch's holy flame,
She was struck and never since saw sun or
moon.
God of Light! refuse her not another ray:
Her bridal garment joins with me
In beseeching, begging thee—
Give her life to see the altar's light one day.

III

All the sorrow earth contains I can support,
All the agony and pain I can endure;
Years of misery will seem surprising short,
If to me thou leav'st her, though without a
cure.

All my dreams before thy throne, O God, I slay ;
 These my offerings let be,
 These my sacrifice to thee—
Give her life to see the altar's light one day.

IV

“Hurry here! O get the doctors—call the
 nurse—
 Call the priest—be quick—some more digit-
 aline—
He is here, alas! before you all—a hearse.”
 Death has passed us by; take up the violin!
To Thy heart my music fain would find its way;
 Every sound Thy grace would earn;
 Let it not as sad return—
Give her life to see the altar's light one day.

V

Every wound and every sigh and groan and
 tear,
 Every drop of Saada's melting flesh and hope
Now ascend, wrapt in this music, pale and
 blear—
 Around Thy throne, in gyves of pain, they
 blindly grope.
What remains, what's gone of her before Thee
 lay:
 Faith and Doubt are at Thy door—
 Mother, brother, pray, implore—
Give her life to see the altar's light one day.

ADELE

Adele! a name that kindled in the breast
Of France's first-born of the fairest Muse
A flame in which a thousand colors fuse
And shame the April rainbows of the West;
But I can only stand upon the crest
Of Song's most sacred Mount and bring excuse
That I have begged, and since the gods refuse,
I steal, and with the theft I thee invest,

A Sun or Moon of Song for all my oceans
Of purest love, an ornament at best,—
A bunch of stars—a wreath for my emotions;
But if the gods with sisters dear are blest,
To me they all must come in joy or sorrow,
From me they all must steal, or beg, or borrow.

NECTAR AND BLOOD

I

If I should worship at thine ancient shrine,
Where thy good sons, incensed by love of war,
Now clamor, as their fathers did of yore—
If I should sacrifice what is not mine,
Nor any living god's, nor even thine—
If for the sake of honor I must pour
This cup of life upon thy barren shore,
How will it fare then with my love divine?

No! let thy sons go forth to burn and slay:
Let them for love of thee and glory smear
And tear the love of all that's pure and dear;
Let them this loveless love in rage display;
I can not join them; no, I can not cheer
As they beneath my window pass to-day.

II

What care I for the tears the maudlin crowd
Sheds o'er my bier—for praise of Church and
State—
For glory that remains within the gate
Of worldly things—for men's esteem avowed—
For freedom that is not with love endowed—
For fame that lingers oft and comes too late,
When these the sorrow of my love create
And haunt her with the shadow of my shroud?

How cowardly, self-centered have I grown—
How dead to true and noble feelings all?
Why not, when they the human soul enthrall—
Why not, when they the beast in man enthrone?
I cling to love, and with love I will fall,
Unwept, unsung, unhonored and unknown.

III

What will these kings and war-lords of the land
And all their ministers of murder fell
Do with their arms and fleets—all tools of hell—
If every son of man resolve to stand
A-wielding, king-like, in his home the wand,
Beside the ones he loves and honors well?
Can force this gentle host of peace compel,
When loving hearts their amber wings expand?

O love, though hounded, outlawed we may be—
Though Slander, dagger-drawn, be on our trail—
Though Hatred with her hydra tongues should
 rail

At us, and though left sinking in the sea
Of ostracism, ay, never will I quail,
But will now and forever cling to thee.

RESURRECTION

The ghost of Winter stalks amidst the boughs
Of Spring and drags along his icy shroud ;
The corn flowers and the wheat, with broken
 vows,
Are now beneath the storm untimely bowed.

O Winter, thou wert buried on the hills ;
Thine epitaph was written with melted snow ;
Thy skeleton is in the barren rills,
Where once thy silvery life-blood used to flow.

Why visitest the glimpses of the sun
So soon, what message bring'st thou from the
 dead ?
Why rudely interrupt the children's fun
And havoc among the Guests of Summer spread ?

Behold, the branches shiver, the blossoms fall ;
The lilac in the leaves a shelter seeks ;
Thy savage winds the Queen of May appal,—
They pale with summer's dust her rosy cheeks.

Withhold the solemn music of thy gale
Until the golden notes of Spring are spun ;
The opera in the trees is but begun,
O, drown it not with thy benighted wail.

For thee May's winged madonnas will not sing,
Nor in thy presence will they now appear :
Begone, that their sweet voices we may hear—
Begone, the world to-day belongs to Spring.

DISARMED DESIRE

O, how the light drifts from the hemlock
grove,
How in the night disarmed Desires do rove!

A sister to the dumb hydrangea thou,
A mystery born of the Then and Now.

The color on thy clouded face—ah me!
Is't from the embers that still burn in thee?

Has not the forge of suffering robbed thee of
The flame with which weak mortals feed their
love?

Wilt thou, no longer fancying the light,
Conjure a virgin flame from darkest night?

And feed it with the salvias of a soul,
That would, but yet—alas! she seeks the Whole.

The hand that broke the screen, the heart that
lied,—
Where are they? Come, the path of truth is
wide.

The silvery cataracts of roaring rills
Meander in the shadows of the hills;

And their bass music,—does it not arise
From that descent that leads up to the skies?

O how disarmed Desire uprises, how—
Does not the darkness crown the Lightning's
brow?

Yet how I wish, yet how I shrink, when I
Behold thee—ah, she's ever in mine eye!

If thy pink, blue and golden hues disclose
The secret, might not that undo the rose?

Thou sister to the dumb hydrangea, when
Will all thy sombre musings rise again?

O, how the light drifts from the hemlock grove,
How in the night disarmed Desires do rove!

A BETTER WOE

Of all my desert days
Thou art the only one
Upon whose sandy face
A strip of pleasure's foliage trembling grows;
Of all the winding ways,
Which with my rapture shone
But one can I retrace,
And there the barren breast of beauty glows.

Of all the dread desires,
That beat within me still,
One shakes the sacred fear
And hurls me into the arms of her below;
But oh, how life suspires—
How soon after the thrill
Of joy I shudder, I hear
My murmuring soul pine for a better woe.

THE FIRST AND LAST

O kiss me now; the end is near
The bright beginning; kiss me, dear.
I would not that thou shouldst one day
In bitter thought remembering say:

“When in the high tide of our bliss
Upon these lips I slew the kiss
That should have lived.”

The kiss I fear—

The poison, ah, the lie, my dear.

Fear not; O kiss me whilst I can't
Refuse; am I to-morrow thine?
Wilt thou be near me when I pant?
* * * * *

I shall not go; thou wilt not pine.
Sweet thoughts!—Alas, the first, the last!
* * * * *

Nay, nay! I cling to thee: the past
Is dying in the lap of night
In which our star is shining bright.

The fingers in the shadow, there!
What are they weaving? Look, a shroud!
Come, purse thy lips; do not despair;
Take hold my hand and speak aloud.

No, no! For whom that shroud, for whom?
Not for our love—not for our joy?
* * * * *

Then seal thou with thy lips my doom,
Ay, with a kiss this life destroy!

IN THE MEADOW

The shadow of thy curls I see
Upon thy lovely face ;
And just a little wish is mine—
The shadow to embrace.

On thy black and silken tresses,
Ah, one longs to feast the sight ;
But the shadows of their beauty,
Hanging on thy cheeks of light,

From my lips, exact a tribute,
Which I pay here in this meadow :
Blush not, my most winsome maiden ;
I have only kissed the shadow.

O, SWEET SOMETIME

O, sweet Sometime, the gardens bloom the while
I wait;
Each moment melts a tear of joy before thy gate;
It is thy pleasure that I burn,—it is my fate,
O, sweet Sometime!

O, when the moment in this interval is born,
When through this sleeping splendor breaks the
lingering morn,
And when thy sensual silence laughs my noise
to scorn—
O, sweet Sometime!

Spare me the vacant moment yet,—O just awhile;
Expectancy, thy sweetest daughter, will beguile
My yearning hours; the shades reflected by her
smile
Are now my haunts, O sweet Sometime.

The waiting while, O sweet Sometime, I can
enjoy;
Thy heralding shadows every beating pang de-
stroy,
And with their breath of musk and myrrh my
soul they cloy,
O, sweet Sometime!

I tremble, I forget, I throb when once I hear
The dying interval announcing thou are near:
A touch, a groan, a kiss and thou wilt disappear,
With bitten lip, O, sweet Sometime!

And then the memory—O, how it will oppress!
Far sweeter is Expectancy—ah, let me press
The vigor from her limbs to mine; I'll yet caress
The waiting while, O, sweet Sometime!

A BED OF FLAME

I saw one day on the horizon grey,
As with my load I wandered near the sea,
A whiff of smoke embrace the sleeping sun ;
And just as their enchantment had begun,
A lonely cloud that roved above the lea
Passed by their couch and hid them from the
day.

I saw this and my soul, long silent, cried :
"Would that I were the whiff of smoke
Now sleeping with the sun !
In beds of flame, how often was I tried,—
How often have I 'neath the stroke
Of God or Satan shone !"

THE SISTER OF DEATH

Ah, talk to me of something else, I pray ;
I'm weary of the dreams that bring nor sleep,
Nor rest, nor love, nor something from the deep,
Where buried are the gods of yesterday ;
Ah, talk to me of Death that takes away
My little sorrows, as they hide and peep,
My little joys, as they disport and leap,
My little vanities, my budless May.

The burden of my virtues and my sins,
The burden of authority that grins
At every effort, ah, the burden kills ;
I know that Death a Sister hath, but where,
Where can I find thee, Love, when shall I share
The sweetness of the silence of the hills ?

RETRIBUTION

How I did hold in deep contempt
The slaves and queens of love!
How I disguised my feelings when
I met a deer or a dove!
How I did smile and sniff and rail
At lovers young and old;
How I denied, in days gone by,
O love, thy charms untold!
But now, alas! I find myself
In chains at Beauty's shrine:
The chains whose power I have denied
Are sapping, sapping mine.

LET THINE EYES WHISPER

Grieve not, for I am near thee;
Sigh not, for I can hear thee;
Wash from thy heart all memory of past wrong;
Doubt not that doubts besmear thee;
Speak not, for I do fear thee;
Let thine eyes whisper love's conciling song.

LILATU LAILI

At night on the radiant Rialto,
By the stars in their houses of glass,
I strolled with my soul in my pocket
And prayed that my night might not pass;
I have seen 'neath the high heels of Beauty
My heart and my soul and my shame;
That form! O, how often it lured me,
And how often I lost in the game!

And how often I walked in the shadow
Of a Laila a mile and a mile!
But the rapture and bliss of a vision
Would end in a great gush of bile.
To the hints that her garment would whisper
I have listened but I would not dare;
I have seen every one of my fancies
Retreat in the dark of her hair.

I have wished that each building around us
Was a cedar, a poplar, a pine;
That the men and the women were statues,
And the rain that was falling was wine;
That the lights were ethereal flowers;
That the cars were the nooks in the wood,—

* * *

“O, enough!” she exclaimed as she kissed me,
“This attic and couch are as good.”

MIDNIGHT MOOD

There's one upon whose youthful breast I fain
would die:

My soul upon her lingering lips through mine
I'd pour

In torrents that would reach and thrill Love's
every shore—

In floods that drown the earth and rise to drown
the sky.

But how can I? Alas, the leaves must shield the
flower,

And silent see her proffering to the butterfly
Her cheeks, her honeyed lips, her soul,—O,
how can I?

In all the worlds, to change my being, is there
no power?

How oft I rise at night to probe the human laws,
My beating temples all my waking hours re-
cording!

And nor solution, nor repose my task afford-
ing,—

How oft my carnal silence cries for the bliss that
was!

The bliss that generous nature gives, that man
denies—

A bliss that's chained in idle words and damned
codes

And creeds and customs creeping in their dark
abodes—

The bliss that's lost within an endless maze of
lies.

Pray, tell me, must the North Wind blow and
sweep by rule?

Must he the virgin ponds and springs and rills
avoid?

See how the ocean, panting, rising, overjoyed,
Holds out her arms to him,—why not the limpid
pool?

And thou, O human Ocean,—would that I could
give

In equal measure, when beneath me thou art
parting!

O, generous, fiery soul, in love though I am
wanting,

My flesh, within thy passion's hearth, will glow
and live.

Thou art the twilight; I'm the dawn; yet we shall
meet

And flood the firmament with fire and rainbow
beauty.

No unfed sun or moon shall rob us of our
booty,

And if the gods should frown,—is not rebellion
sweet?

But ah, live Twilight! why cannot the Dawn be
true?

Why can't I quaff from thy sad lips, as thou,
from mine?

Why can't this heart, forgetting once, as well
be thine?

How can I my most holy passion tame, subdue?

That youthful breast, imprisoned, I see through
thine own;

Those Eastern eyes cannot be hidden by thy
flame ;
That form, as I am in thine arms—O, do not
blame—
In mine I fancy,—let me die in shame alone !

THY SMILE

Outside the gates of night, above the moon,
Where breatheth none but gods, where light alone
Forever rules from his star-studded throne,
Where Melancholy never reaches noon,
And where the Pleiades their harps attune,—
There in the centre of the lightning zone,
Upon the zephyr which the storm hath sown,
Thou first wert formed with pleasure to com-
mune.

And now in Pleasure's world, upon the face
Of bright and gay Bohemia's fairest child
The zephyr dallies with the lightning flash ;
The smile divine, as well the subtle grace
Are deeply there impressed, by naught defiled—
There joy's received as well as paid in cash.

UNADORNED

Regardless of the cries of priests and sages
I strove to give my bleeding soul her wages ;
 And each embrace or memory of one
Is worth to me the treasures of the ages,
Is worth to me the treasures of the ages.

Each shadow of a kiss or fond embrace
Down in the depth of solitude I trace ;
 And in the corners of my darkest den
The fallen gods of pleasure find a place,
The fallen gods of pleasure find a place.

And though knee-deep I find myself in hell,
And though the flames around my cheeks should
 swell,

 I shall not loose my grip on Allah's throne,
I shall not fall alone, I know full well,
I shall not fall alone, I know full well.

DISSOLUTION

I languish in thy penetrating clasp,
Just as a bird entangled on a bough
 Shaken by the wind ;
Yet here would I be happy in the grasp
Of death ; but in thy breast I'm hidden now,
 And death is blind.

I melt beneath thy storm of kisses, dear,
Just as the gum upon the almond tree
Of melting when alone and far from thee :
 Melts 'neath the rain ;
Yet would I melt to-night than live in fear
 O, storm again !

A SERENADE

I

The moon hath said her sad good-bye,
My sleeping queen ;
And all the stars are wondering why
Thou art unseen.
Behold! abashed, they take to flight,
As through the casement breaks thy light.
Arise, my dawn, arise!
Arise, my queen serene!

II

The field of heaven is all thine own,
My peerless star,
Just as my heart is thine alone,
Be near or far.
So let thy face adorn the night,
And flood it with thy dazzling light.
Arise, my queen, arise!
Arise, to my guitar!

III

The vaults above all vacant seem,
My sweetest flower ;
And for thy scent, the cherubim
Long at this hour.
A moment from thy sweet dream part,
Though in that dream be wove my heart.
Arise, my queen, arise!
Let fall thy perfume shower.

THE BRASS BED

I love thy color and thy symmetry ;
I love the art that wrought thy glittering arms,
Thy canopy, thy satin portieres too ;
I love the silks and feathers on thy breast—
The cushions and the pillows and the quilts :
I love thine every part.
Yet still more do I love to rest in thee—
To dream of art's perfection in thy frame ;
Of paths as smooth, as shining as thy limbs ;
Of scenes as exquisite as thy coils ;
Of nooks as warm as thine hospitable bosom,
As cool and as refreshing as thy veinless naked
arms,
I dream of all beneath thy soothing mantle.

But O, I love my dreams much more than thee,
And one sad soul much more than all my dreams.

If thou hadst but an eye to see,
To look upon the guest that lay upon thy floor
Beneath thy silken ceiling !
O, hadst thou but an ear to hear
The plaintive chirpings of this swallow-soul.
Couldst thou but feel her forehead
Moistened with the sweat of hope and pain.
For forty moons she lay within thine arms,
Rubbing her erstwhile rosy cheeks
Against the pleers of Ayoub of yore.
Couldst thou but see, O Bed of Brass,
Couldst thou but hear, couldst thou but feel,—

Of what use all thy showy stuff—
Thy glittering brass, the filigree of art,
Thy floor of down and feather cushions all,
Thy snow-white mantles, satin tapestries ?

Beauty and Pain!
Death will not come with thee, O Pain!
Life will not come with thee, O Beauty!
The fires of hell are but a taper's flame compared
to this.

Thy guest, O Bed of Brass,
Looks on thee with a yearning glance,
And yet her soul, bearing the torch of Pain,
Is searching all the worlds for Death.

THREE GOLDEN THREADS

(After de Lisle.)

Like yonder swallow, I would soar away,—
Above the sea, far from this buzzing mart;
But how can I? A cruel, little fay
Has fettered with three golden threads my
heart.

Her honeyed tongue the one; her eyes the other;
The third her lips; and that completes her art.
No fruits from other gardens can I gather,
For she has tied with golden threads my heart.

O, how I would asunder rend my chain,
And from the tears and pangs of love depart;
Ah, no! 'tis better that I die in pain
Than break the golden threads of my poor
heart.

INDEPENDENT BLOSSOMS

When the spring boughs were told
Soon the rose will unfold
Herself in the bower
Of which she is queen,
Their blossoms, beguiling
The sad leaves, said smiling:
"No slaves to a flower
Have we ever been."

Our lords are the birds,
And they love not in words;
They sing when we smile
And sob when we fall;
Her lord is the liar—
The thief or the buyer—
Who smells her the while
She lives, and that's all.

THE GOD OF MY GODDESS

The old gods and their slaves I've deserted;
The new gods I've shunned at first sight;
And my god is the god of the goddess
That presides at my feast of delight.
But once, when the dark moment lingered,
I questioned the god she adores;
To his throne I implored her to lead me,
And, behold! I'm the god she implores.

A PEASANT'S SONG

O, thou, who loved me once,
From thy Pagoda glance ;
Shoot down a poisoned lance :
 All's well that comes from thee.

Look back, look down once more ;
Dear was to thee this shore ;
I see thee nevermore
 Beneath the olive tree.

Remains my station low,
Whilst thou dost greater grow ;
Ah, fate hath struck the blow
 That parted thee and me.

How can I bear my fate,
How can I loveless wait
In this most sorry state,
 When thou art far and free ?

Far from the soul that swore
On love's abysmal door
To cling forevermore
 To none on earth but thee ;

Free from the sacred plight
Which, to dispel the night,
Thou madest, when I quite
 Fell near thy bended knee.

Dost thou not still remember
Love's May and Love's December ?
Both burned their sacred ember
 In our sweet company.

Dost hear the echoes fall
Within thy gilded hall?
Dost thou not ever recall
The day thou wert like me?

When all thy gardens bloom,
Look out into the gloom;
There does the flame consume
Thy budless lilac tree.

There often thou didst play
A-mindless of the day
When soul to soul would say:
"No more of thee and me."

And when withers thy rose,
Throw to the wind that blows
This way a leaf; who knows
What therein I can see.

And till my course is run
I'll count them one by one—
These leaves; and may the sun
Of joy ne'er set on thee.

HER FIRST SORROW

'T is but a score of hours when he didst swear
My sorrow and my joy to share,
 Despite the fates, fore'er ;
But now he's gone to cash again his lie ;
 Others his shame with me will wear,
 Why should I die ?

Last night his lips my very feet didst burn ;
His kisses dropt, my love to earn,
 Whichever way he'd turn ;
But now he's gone another soul to rob,
 Another heart to lure and spurn,
 Why should I sob ?

He did not kiss me when he said good-bye ;
I let him go, not asking why,
 Nor do I for him sigh ;
He's gone another virgin breast to tear,
 He's gone on other lips to die,
 Why should I care ?

A NOCTURN

Upon the face of darkness beams my soul—
Nearby, behind the curtains of my sight ;
And 'round it weary waves of wonder roll—
Sad seas of color o'er dead seas of light :
Here is no Space, no Time—nor day nor
night—
Here is the boundless, undiminished Whole—
Here is my soul.

Here is no love that hides beneath its shoal
The sandix that can redden a sea of years ;
Here is no lust that lies to Beauty's mole
And draws from eyes of flint a flood of tears ;
Here is no disenchantment and no fears—
No blasted hopes, no jaunty joy, no dole—
Here is my soul.

Now lost in clay and water ; now the Whole
Is lost within me : sea and earth and sky
I dismiss from my presence, as I roll
My lids and lo, the lord of night am I.
Into the airless wilderness I fly ;
Here is no vain desire, no galling goal—
Here is my soul.

In Eternity, shod with the hoary noul
Of deathless Death—in dim and shimmering
shades
Of soilless vales that bosom and cajole
The crystal flowers dropping from cloud-cas-
cades ;
Here in the grove of myriad colonnades
Of jet and pearl and amber I now stroll—
Here is my soul.

SAADA

Long hast thou suffered, sister of my heart,
Still thou art
Fair to see;
Thy pains thou entertainest with thy song,
But how long
Will this be?

The seasons all have come and gone, my dear,
But thy cheer
Still abides.
I ask which of thy moan or song is best
And thou sayst:
"God decides."

I feel the ebbing of the undertone
Of thy moan
In thy song:
How long will tears and irony compete
For thee, Sweet,
O, how long?

When wilt thou, Baby dear, with nimble feet,
Run to greet
Me at the door?
When wilt thou, Saada, walk again with me
Near the sea,
As before?

O sister, how I wish to see thee run,
In the sun,
On the sands!
The singing breakers and the smiling beach
To thee reach
Out their hands.

The light of day is longing for thy face
And the grace
Of thy form:
O how I wish to see thee, Noor-ul-Ain
Caught again
In the storm!

STOLEN SALVIAS

O, bleeding blossoms, tell, were my heart there—
There in your bed,
Would that sweet thief that stole you unaware
Have stolen it instead?
Come with me, scarlet salvias, to your home;
We are not late;
Love in the moonlight there again will roam—
There let us wait.
I still remember when one night she crowned
Me with the stars
Plucked from your scarlet sky—she would
astound
The kings of Mars.
She then would slay me—wash the face of night
With my bold blood—
Ay, she would show that yours is not as bright
And not as good.
O, scarlet salvias, why should I refuse
When I'm with you?
Why should I chill my lady, if she choose
To steal me too?

JEALOUSY

The violets their soft, dark lashes part,
While robins serenade them far and near;
But the anemone, with ebon heart
And blood-shot eyes, pretends she does not
hear.

The violets invite the nightingale
Whose carols fall in dew upon their bed;
But the hydrangea, as saffron pale,
Holds high above the wall her nodding head.

BENEATH THE SALVIAS

Beneath the salvias, where some angel slew
The favors that were granted by his god,
My heart is hidden; let thy feet be shod
With feathers plucked from my wings of crim-
son hue,
When here again thou might'st be wandering
through;
Look not above; I'm breathing in the sod,
A-mindless of the years, 'neath which I'm trod—
Of Spring birds' song, or shrieks of Winter's
crew,
Here let me sleep, my lady; wake me not;
Here let me gather, hidden from the moon
And the sun, the strength to rise again and see;
No sweeter, dearer, more enchanting spot
Is there for my sick heart; O, not so soon—
Awake me not—O, let me dream of thee.

GONE WITH THE SWALLOWS.

Must I convey at last the news to thee?
Must I now mourn the love that lived in me?
Gone with the autumn, with the dying year.
Gone with the kisses that are yet so near!
Gone with the swallows somewhere o'er the sea!
But with the Spring will he again
Return, will he with me remain?
Must I till then, remembering naught,
Forgetting all that love had brought,
Grove in the shadows of the slain?
Must I forget the day
That took my love away,
And all the happy hours
That reared for him their towers
And crowned him with the flowers
Of all the queens of May?
Must I alone
My once my own,
In my retreat
The new year greet,
And winter meet,
And winds hear moan?
Not yet
Can I
Forget:
But why
One clings
And sings
To things
That die?

TO THE SONNET

Though cribbed and gyved, thou canst within thy
walls

Unfold a wondrous wealth of worlds unseen,
And flood the soul's abyss with moon-light sheen,
As well as darken passions' gilded halls ;
Thy fourteen outlets are so many falls
From which gush out the prisoned joy, or
spleen—

The siivery cascades, or the billows green,
And either a sea of bliss or grief recalls.
Thou goddess of the gems of Fancy's deep,
Though few thy facets, they reflect the whole
Of inner-self in multi-shaded hues ;
Thou art the couch of dreams that never sleep ;
Thou art the phœnix of the poet's soul,
As well the crystal palace of his muse.

THE TOMB AND THE ROSE

(*After Victor Hugo.*)

The Tomb said to the Rose:
O Flower of Love, where goes
Each tear which Dawn upon thy cheeks doth
shed?

The Rose said to the Tomb:
What makest in thy gloom
Impenetrable of the countless dead?

Said the Rose: O Tomb, of all these tears,
In my recesses ere the sun appears,
I make a perfume which the gods will prize.
Said the Tomb: O plaintive Flower,
Of every mortal I devour
An angel do I make for Paradise.

REST

Long have I a word enshrined
And worshipped with a piety blind!
Long have I been seeking Rest
In the East and in the West!
Here and there and everywhere
Have I seen her shadow fair;
But the shadow seems to fade
Like the flowers of yonder glade.
In my lone retreat I sought
Her, but dreams against me fought.
In my nights for her I pray,
But with sleep she stays away.

Foolish is thine effort, vain—
Fruitless, hopeless is thy pain!
With the march of Motion keep,

In thy walk and in thy sleep
Beyond thy finite power it lies
To chain the coursers of the skies.
Even nomads and cells minute
Worlds of unrest constitute.

Rest is no where to be found;
Each to all in suffering bound.
And no power can deliver thee,
Mortal, from activity.
In thy life as in thy death,
In thy heart as in thy breath,
On the earth as in the skies
Restless Motion never dies.
Always raging, always spinning,
Endless and without beginning.

Death, like me, is seeking Rest,
And all the seas are in her quest;
But ah, poor souls, she is beyond
Our grasp; we must go on and on.
No, nor even the grave is free
From the laws that shackle me;
New life from his worms takes wing,
And on his face fresh blossoms spring.

THE FRUITS OF DEATH

I

Said golden leaves upon the ground
To new born leaves upon the tree:
"Soon homeward autumn winds will blow
And carry us away to sea,
Just as it shook the night before
The branches all and set us free;
No longer do we envy bird or dew,
Nor do we want again to be like you."

II

The sweet and tender leaves replied:
"Still we rejoice that we are here;
We rise from the eternal source
Of life to crown the dying year;
The wind that freed you we can see,
The sea you love we always hear.
You are the booty of the storm and we,
We are the fruits of Death upon Life's tree."

THE "FLATIRON" AND THE RUINS OF PALMYRA

To the Ruins of Palmyra this the "Flatiron" ad-
drest:

"Did you ever in your glory
Dream of looking up to see my crest?"

To the "Flatiron" the Ruins thus replied across
the sea:

"We were like thee yesterday,
To-morrow thou wilt like us be."

IT WAS ALL FOR HIM

I strolled upon the Brooklyn Bridge one day,
 Beneath the storm;
None but a lad in rags upon the way
I saw;—there on a bench he lay
 Heedless of form.

He seemingly was reading what the Shower
 Was publishing upon the Bridge and down
 the Bay;
Yet he was writing, writing at this hour,—
 Writing in a careless sort of way.

Upon a pad he scribbled and as fast the rain
 Retouched, effaced, corrected and revised.
Was he recording Nature's solemn strain,
 Or sketching choristers therein disguised?

Whatever it be, I found myself quite by his side;
 My nod and smile he pocketed and wrote
 again;
"Read me your drizzling stuff," I said, and he
 replied:
 "I've written a check in payment for this
 shower of rain."

REPENTANCE

When tears wash tears and soul upon soul leaps,
When clasped in arms of anguish and of pain,
When love beneath the feet of passion creeps,
Ah me, what do we gain?

When we our rosy bower to demons lease,
When Life's most tender strains by shrieks are
slain,
When strife invades our quietude and peace,
Ah me, what do we gain?

When we allow the herbs of hate to sprout,
When weeds of jealousy the lily stain,
When pearls of faith are crushed by stones of
doubt,
Ah me, what do we gain?

When night creeps on us in the light of day,
When we nepenthes of good cheer disdain,
When on the throne of courage sits dismay,
Ah me, what do we gain?

When sweetness, goodness, kindness all have
died,
When naught but broken, bleeding hearts re-
main,
When rough-shod o'er our better self we ride,
Ah me, what do we gain?

O, GIVE ME STRENGTH TO TAKE

Thy love's as tender as the drooping rose that
sadly says to earth:

"No more have I the strength to take what
thou giv'st me;"

But unlike her, alas, thy love's complaint of
dearth:

"Thou hast no strength to give what I demand
of thee."

Thy love hath heard the many whispered prom-
ises of every soul;

His birth methinks is nigh coeval with the
birth of time:

He lives in death throughout the ages, and his
goal

Is hidden in the faded flowers from every
clime.

His soul is deeper than the sea and deepest cav-
erns in its bed;

'T is higher than the highest sky above our
own;

'T is purer than the morning dew a-dripping
from the salvias red;

'T is mightier than the four winds, blowing
from every zone.

This love hath offered me the keys of all his halls
and towers,

And to my heart with clinging kisses he ap-
pealed;

But, ah, forgive me God! must I the sweetest
flowers

Refuse because they do not grow in Beauty's
field?

WRITTEN AFTER READING KING LEAR

Long is his course, O master of our woes,
And joys, and tears, our passions and desires,
In nature's school—in hell-begotten fires;
Dread is the agony and fell the throes
Which with the Night and Storm he undergoes,
While Treason in his robes herself attires,
And Love beneath adultery's sheet expires,
And mocked Sincerity sincerer grows,
To vie with wailing winds and weeping clouds
And valleys shrieking in the fangs of storms,
This Human Hurricane thou didst create;
But just as soon as Death this horror shrouds,
I hear the distant cry of fiery forms,
Ay, and the creaking of hell's deepest gate.

NEAR THE CASCADES

Hold back thy lips, I pray;
Just let me rest this way;
My soul is in the spray
Arising from the silvery cascades murmuring
farewell to the day.

Thy kisses 'neath a sigh
Of mine extinguished lie;
O friend, I choke, I die:
Pray, let me raise my head to see the parting
light, the vivid sky,

If every kiss of thine
Is safely kept with mine
For one for whom I pine,
Wouldst thou, contented with the taking, call my
love a love divine?

Ay, and for every tear
Thou sheddest when I'm near
I shed a score to hear
Her echo my desire's sigh, albeit she is not thy
peer.

If I were but a reed,
Or but a fern or weed,
This would not be my creed;
But prick thou these cold slips and all the roots
of me in heaven will bleed.

Thy burning breath is creeping
All over me; 't is leaping
Into my bones and sweeping
Their ashes out, up and into mine eyes, alas!
the awful reaping.

No longer do I fear,
Nor see, nor feel, nor hear ;
No longer am I near ;
If thou wilt quench thy flame, kiss now the lips
that were to thee so dear.

As well kiss thou the grass
On which I lay, alas !
Like me, thou too wilt pass ;
One kiss will turn thy lips to ashes and one tear,
thine eyes to glass.

Beneath this hemlock tree
A clod I leave to thee ;
But over land and sea
My soul is rising, rising, rising, searching for the
gods that be.

But gods have lived, and lied,
And loved, and fell, and died ;
And like me too they cried
For mercy at the snow white feet of Beauty's
daughter,
Beauty's bride.

And when from Beauty's spell
Her soul is free, she'll dwell
In mine, the storm to quell :
In mine she'll rise to realms of bliss, or swiftly
whirl into the deepest hell.

ONWARD KEEP

Onward keep! Forget the self that cried:
"This world's a forest choked with ice and
snow;
No spark of fire through it can ever ride,
No human flame in it can ever glow."
And keeping onward, now, I find
The golden leaves of yesterday
All safely hidden from the wind
Beneath the snow that melts away,
And on the shivering boughs
New leaves and tender sprout;
They crown the winter's brows,
And laugh away his doubt.
And in the brook
The echoes of
What I forsook—
What I did love.
And the frost
'Neath the breath
Of me must
Welcome death;
And the heat
Left behind
Guides the feet
Of the blind.
Onward keep;
Laugh and weep;
Pain and joy
Hide and peep.
Rise and fall—
Fall and rise;
This is all—
This is wise.

ALLAH WA ANA

Though I'm God, thou art man, we are one,
We are all and we shall ever be ;
Though the light of my sky thou didst shun,
Thou shalt love me ere thy course is run,
As forever I live loving thee.

Thou art mine, I am thine and the fire
Of my breath all thy regions shall warm,
Ere the life in thy soil shall expire,
Ere the seeds of thy basest desire
From their prison break out and take form.

Thou wilt doubt and deny me forsooth
And rejoice in thy vanity's power ;
Thou wilt die on the breast of my truth,
In the end thou wilt laugh at thy youth,
And its wine although old will be sour.

I was with thee when thou didst deny,
As I am with thy mother at prayer ;
I was with thee when thou didst defy
My hell and my earth and my sky,
And I love none the less those that dare.

In the yogi's pagoda I am ;
In the fire of the magi I was ;
To the sons of Abraheem and Sham
And their foes and to thee I undam
All the banks of my veins on the cross.

Through the spheres and the primitive throngs
I came down and I struggled with thee ;
Through the ages I sing in thy songs,
But I leave thee to rise on thy wrongs ;—
Thou shalt rise and thou shalt live in me.

IN MEMORY OF E. M. EL—K.

When my parched lips upon thy princely brow,
Placid as tropic mead, as glacier cold,
Imprinted a last farewell, where wert thou—
Where didst thy soul its loveliness unfold?

Can't be that in some undiscovered sphere
The Muses sing their souls to thine in bliss?
Can't be that when I kiss thy forehead here
A thousand angels echo there my kiss?

What is this mask, where is the soul, O where,
And from these eyes, O God, where went the
light?
My silence cries within me in despair,
My reason's sinking in this sea of Night.

Esau, I am beside thee now alone,
I dare not weep, I dare not even breathe;
But through the stillness something hither blown
Makes of thine amber locks a golden wreath.

Life flutters in thy hair as in mine eyes;
Death can not choke the breeze that whispers
there
A word of hope; beneath my breath will rise
A hair with God eternity to share

The noon and eve of Life thou didst not see,
But in its Dawn thou didst anticipate
What jealous Night would not permit to be,
What pain and suffering never could abate.

Shall I strew on thee faded blossoms, Brother,
Or fiery buds consumed by their own flame,
Or myrrh and myrtle from our Mountain-mother,
Or golden rods that whispered oft thy name?

Or, at the shrine of Liberty and Love,
Where thou didst worship ardently and die,
Shall I now join the gods come from above
With thy sweet songs this shrine to beautify?

Ye sapling-pines of star-kissed Lebanon,
Ye cedars laden with a wealth of years,
Send with the mist of dawn and the rising sun
Your garlands, and your incense, and your
tears.

TO ABU'L-ALA

In thy melancholy's pensive Fancy
Wisdom rolled its beauteous stars and moons,
Just as in my riotings of pleasure
Thy lone midnights roll into my noons.

Abu'l-Ala, in thy glorious darkness
Didst thou not remember unborn me?
In thy journey to the farthest planets
Didst thou not a burdened shadow see?

Ay, behind the portals of Saturnus
Secretly the cup to thee I passed ;
Long, long after this cup thou returnest
Filled with gems of fancy and recast.

In thy Prison a thousand Yamen weapons
Thou didst forge for the oppressed and weak :
In my attic a thousand Beauty roses
I pluck for thee from a Yankee cheek.





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